

**UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND**  
**FINAL EXAMINATION 2005**

TITLE OF PAPER: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

COURSE CODE: ENG405 / E4P4

TIME ALLOWED: ENG405: 2 HRS.  
E4P4: 3 HRS

- INSTRUCTIONS:
1. E4P4: Answer THREE questions.
  2. ENG405: Answer TWO questions
  3. Under no circumstances should you repeat material or write about the same text more than once.
  4. Incorrect use of English and literary conventions will be penalized.
  5. This paper contains 9 pages, cover page included.

THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GIVEN  
BY THE INVIGILATOR.

Question 1

Read the poems below and answer the questions which follow:

**Heritage** Countee Cullen

What is Africa to me:  
 Copper sun or scarlet sea,  
 Jungle star or jungle track,  
 Strong bronzed men, or regal black  
 Women from whose loins I sprang  
 When the birds of Eden sang?  
*One three centuries removed  
 From the scenes his fathers loved,  
 Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,  
 What is Africa to me?*  
 So I lie, who all day long  
 Want no sound except the song  
 Sung by wild barbaric birds  
 Goaded massive jungle herds,  
 Juggernauts of flesh that pass  
 Trampling tall defiant grass  
 Where young forest lovers lie,  
 Plighting troth beneath the sky.  
 So I lie, who always hear,  
 Though I cram against my ear  
 Both my thumbs, and keep them there,  
 Great drums throbbing through the air.  
 So I lie, whose fount of pride,  
 Dear distress, and joy allied,  
 Is my somber flesh and skin,  
 With the dark blood dammed within  
 Like great pulsing tides of wine  
 That, I fear, must burst the fine  
 Channels of the chafing net  
 Where they surge and foam and fret.

Africa? A book one thumbs  
 Listlessly till slumber comes.  
 Unremembered are her bats  
 Circling through the night, her cats  
 Crouching in the river reeds,  
 Stalking gentle flesh that feeds  
 By the river brink; no more  
 Does the bugle-throated roar  
 Cry that monarch claws have leapt

From the scabbards where they slept.  
Silver snakes that once a year  
Doff the lovely coats you wear,  
Seek no covert in your fear  
Lest a mortal eye should see;  
What's your nakedness to me?  
Here no leprous flowers rear  
Fierce corollas in the air;  
Here no bodies sleek and wet,  
Dripping mingled rain and sweat,  
Tread the savage measures of  
Jungle boys and girls in love.  
What is last year's snow to me,  
Last year's anything? The tree  
Budding yearly must forget  
How its past arose or set –  
Bough and blossom, flower, fruit,  
Even what shy bird with mute  
Wonder at her travail there,  
Meekly labored in its hair.  
*One three centuries removed  
From the scenes his fathers loved,  
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,  
What is Africa to me?*

So I lie, who find no peace  
Night or day, no slight release  
From the unremitting beat  
Made by cruel padded feet  
Walking through my body's street.  
Up and down they go, and back,  
Treading out a jungle track.  
So I lie, who never quite  
Safely sleep from rain at night –  
I can never rest at all  
When the rain begins to fall;  
Like a soul gone mad with pain  
I must match its weird refrain;  
Ever must I twist and squirm,  
Writhing like a baited worm,  
While its primal measures drip  
Through my body, crying, "Strip!  
Doff this new exuberance.  
Come and dance the Lover's Dance!"  
In an old remembered way  
Rain works on me night and day.

Quaint, outlandish heathen gods  
Black men fashion out of rods,  
Clay, and brittle bits of stone,  
In a likeness like their own,  
My conversion came high-priced;  
I belong to Jesus Christ,  
Preacher of humility;  
Heathen gods are naught to me.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
So I make an idle boast;  
Jesus of the twice-turned cheek,  
Lamb of God, although I speak  
With my mouth thus, in my heart  
Do I play a double part.  
Ever at Thy glowing altar  
Must my heart grow sick and falter,  
Wishing He I served were black,  
Thinking then it would not lack  
Precedent of pain to guide it,  
Let who would or might deride it;  
Surely then this flesh would know  
Yours had borne a kindred woe.  
Lord, I fashion dark gods, too,  
Daring even to give You  
Dark despairing features where,  
Crowned with dark rebellious hair,  
Patience wavers just so much as  
Mortal grief compels, while touches  
Quick and hot, of anger, rise  
To smitten cheek and weary eyes.  
Lord, forgive me if my need  
Sometimes shapes a human creed.

*All day long and all night through,  
One thing only must I do:  
Quench my pride and cool my blood,  
Lest I perish in the flood.  
Lest a hidden ember set  
Timber that I thought was wet  
Burning like the driest flax,  
Melting like the merest wax,  
Lest the grave restore its dead.  
Not yet has my heart or head  
In the least way realised  
They and I are civilized.*

**The Children of Nonti** Mafika Gwala

Nonti Nzimande died long, long ago  
Yet his children still live.  
Generation after generation, they live on;  
Death comes to the children of Nonti  
And the children of Nonti cry but won't panic  
And there is survival in the children of Nonti.

Poverty swoops its deadly wings. But tough,  
strong and witty are the children of Nonti.  
The wet rains fall. The roads become like  
the marshed rice paddies of the Far East;  
And on these desolate roads there is song  
Song in the Black voices of the children of Nonti.

Someone marries  
The bride does not hide her face under the veil;  
The maidens dance near the kraal  
Dance before the 'make it merry' eyes  
of the elders. The elders joshing it  
on their young days.  
There is still free laughter  
in the children of Nonti.

An ox drops to the earth, then another;  
Knives run into the meat. Making the feast  
to be blood-filled with Life.  
The old, the dead, are brought into the Present  
of continuous nature in the children of Nonti.  
Got to be a respecting with the children of Nonti.

When a daughter has brought shame  
The women show anger; not wrath.  
And the illegitimate born is one of  
the family.  
When a son is charged by the white law  
The children of Nonti bring their heads together  
In a bid to free one of the children of Nonti.

There are no sixes and nines be one  
with the children of Nonti. Truth is truth  
and lies are lies amongst the children of Nonti.  
For when summer takes its place after the winter  
The children of Nonti rejoice  
and call it proof of Truth

Truth reigns amongst the children of Nonti.

Sometimes a son rises above the others  
of the children of Nonti. He explains the workings  
and the trappings of white thinking.

The elders debate;

And add to their abounding knowledge  
of black experience.

The son is still one of the black children of Nonti  
For there is oneness in the children of Nonti.

And later, later when the sun  
is like forever down;

Later when the dark rules  
above the light of Truth

The black children of Nonti will rise and speak.

They will speak of the time  
when Nonti lived in peace with his children;

Of the times when age did not count  
above experience. The children of Nonti will stand  
their grounds in the way that Nonti speared his foes  
to free his black brothers from death and woes;

They shall fight with the tightened grip  
of a cornered pard. For they shall be knowing that  
Nothing is more vital than standing up  
For the Truths that Nonti lived for.

Then there shall be Freedom in that stand  
by the children of Nonti.

Truthful tales shall be told

Of how the children of Nonti pushed their will;

And continued to live by the peace

The peace that Nonti once taught to them.

- a) With the aid of well selected illustrations, compare and contrast Cullen and Gwala's response to their respective situations, highlighting the issues each raises in his poem along with whatever arresting aspects of language use which catch your attention. [20]
- b) Briefly comment on the reasons for the disparity in social vision. [10]

Question 2

“Mphahlele’s autobiography, Down Second Avenue and Lorraine Hansberry’s play, A Raisin in the Sun, show a similar family structure.”

- a) Describe this structure and compare and contrast the problems the two families face. [20]
- b) Comment on the strength and its source(s) of the respective family heads. [10]

Question 3

Read the two poems below and answer the questions that follow:

**Goodbye, Christ** Langston Hughes

Listen, Christ,  
You did all right in your day, I reckon –  
But that day’s gone now.  
They ghosted you up a swell story, too,  
Called it Bible –  
But it’s dead now.  
The popes and the preachers have  
Made too much money from it.  
They have sold you to too many

Kings, generals, robbers, and killers –  
Even to the Tzar and the Cossacks,  
Even to Rockefeller’s Church,  
Even to THE SATURDAY EVENING POST.  
You ain’t no good no more.  
They’ve pawned you  
Till you’ve done wore out.

Goodbye  
Christ Jesus Lord God Jehova,

Beat it on away from here now.  
Make way for a new guy with no religion at all –  
A real guy named  
Marx Communist Lenin Peasant Stalin Worker ME –

I said, ME!

Go ahead on now,

You're getting in the way of things, Lord.  
And please take Saint Ghandi with you when you go,  
And Saint Pope Pius,  
And Saint Aimee McPherson,  
And big black Saint Becton  
Of the Consecrated Dime.  
Move!

Don't be so slow about movin'!  
The world is mine from now on –  
And nobody's gonna sell ME  
To a king, or a general,  
Or a millionaire.

**At War With the Preacher-man** Senzo Malinga

My armful of goat skins  
Captures the eyes of the preacher-man;  
I meet him on the shop veranda.  
He tells me I have to change  
my evil ways;  
I go home cursing,  
Declaring war against the preacher-man.

Later he comes to my place  
Accuses me of deflecting people  
from the right way to Heaven;  
I in turn call on my gods  
To deliver their godly anger  
upon this insolent preacher-man;  
For I do not live  
That I may go to Heaven,  
But that I may have supper tonight.

- a) Compare and contrast the projected attitude, along with its cause, towards Christianity. [12]
- b) With the aid of brief citations from other texts, comment whether either poem projects a popular black / African view towards Christianity. [12]
- c) Indicate your personal view towards the two poems. [6]



Question 4

“The quest for belonging is found in both Jubilee by Margaret Walker and A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry, but the historical circumstances motivating the quest are different.”

Discuss, highlighting the different circumstances confronting the characters and thus shaping their quests in the two texts.

Question 5

- (a) Briefly recount the respective situations faced by Gordon Ngubene in A Dry White Season and Jefferson in A Lesson Before Dying. [16]
- (b) To what extent do the social forces of the time contribute to the two characters' respective situations? [14]

Question 6

‘A Dry White Season derives its title from Mongane Wally Serote’s poem, “For Don M. – Banned”’:

It is a dry white season  
 dark leaves don't last, their brief lives dry out  
 and with a broken heart they dive down gently  
                   headed for the earth  
 not even bleeding.  
 It is a dry white season brother,  
 only the trees know the pain as they still stand erect  
 dry like steel, their branches dry like wire,  
 indeed, it is a dry white season  
 but seasons come to pass.

- (a) Comment on the poem’s meaning and theme, especially how these are enhanced through the poem’s rich imagery. [12]
- (b) Discuss how the poem serves as both a thesis and a central metaphor of Andre Brink’s exploration in A Dry White Season of social conditions under white supremacist rule in South Africa. [18]